



STATE OF WASHINGTON
STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL

May 2018
Log No. _____

1. State Building Code to be Amended:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Building Code | <input type="checkbox"/> International Mechanical Code |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ICC ANSI A117.1 Accessibility Code | <input type="checkbox"/> International Fuel Gas Code |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Existing Building Code | <input type="checkbox"/> NFPA 54 National Fuel Gas Code |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International Residential Code | <input type="checkbox"/> NFPA 58 Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Fire Code | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildland Urban Interface Code |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uniform Plumbing Code | |

Section(s): R311.1

Title: Means of Egress

2. Proponent Name (Specific local government, organization or individual):

Proponent: Quyen Thai (WABO TCD)

Title: Plans Examiner III

Date: 03/07/2022

3. Designated Contact Person:

Name: Quyen Thai

Title: Plans Examiner III

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4. Proposed Code Amendment.

Code(s): 2021 International Residential Code

Section(s): R311.1

Amend section to read as follows:

R310.1 Emergency escape and rescue opening required. *Basements, habitable attics* and every sleeping room shall have not less than one operable *emergency escape and rescue opening*. Where *basements* contain one or more sleeping rooms, an *emergency escape and rescue opening* shall be required in each sleeping room. *Emergency escape and rescue openings* shall open directly into a *public way*, or to a *yard or court* providing an unobstructed path with a width of not less than 36 inches (914 mm) that opens to a public way.

Exceptions:

1. Storm shelters and *basements* used only to house mechanical *equipment* not exceeding a total *floor area* of 200 square feet (18.58 m²).
2. Where the *dwelling unit* or *townhouse unit* is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section P2904, sleeping rooms in basements shall not be required to have *emergency escape* and *rescue openings* provided that the basement has one of the following:

2.1 One means of egress complying with Section R311 and one emergency escape and rescue opening.

2.2 Two means of egress complying with Section R311.

3. A yard shall not be required to open directly into a public way where the yard opens to an unobstructed path from the yard to the public way. Such path shall have a width of not less than 36 inches (914 mm). The following shall not be considered obstructions:

3.1. Gates with operational constraints and opening control devices without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge.

3.2. Window wells equipped with a removable cover complying R310.4.4.

5. Briefly explain your proposed amendment, including the purpose, benefits and problems addressed.

This proposal will help clarify what is allowed in the unobstructed path that leads from the yard or court to the public way. Currently, an “unobstructed path” is not defined, requiring each jurisdiction to interpret what objects will unduly hinder occupants from self-evacuation along this path. This leads to a lack in consistency in how this section is enforced.

This proposal recognizes that privacy fences are commonly used to enclose yards and addresses the use of gates to provide egress from these enclosed yards. It is important to note that gate hardware is commonly used to maintain security by restricting access into the yard while maintaining free egress for self-evacuating occupants. Securing the gate with a padlock or other locking device would require an occupant to have knowledge of the key location and have access to it during the emergency. At a minimum, this would create a delay in occupant self-evacuation and is unacceptable.

This proposal also recognizes that window wells are another common object that may be located within the pathway, particularly in narrow side yards. Open window wells located in the path can create significant elevation changes that pose a hazard for self-evacuating occupants. Requiring a cover over the opening eliminates this hazard and maintains the required unobstructed path.

Arguments have been made that a locked gate should not be considered an obstruction but what is the purpose of a locked gate but to be an obstruction against intruders. Based on the argument that gates are intended to obstruct unauthorized individuals from accessing the property, it is therefore prudent to consider that a locked gate is an obstruction for both ingress and egress.

The second exception has been known to cause confusion where window wells are constructed. By allowing grate covering, the code allows for an egress walking surface over the opening. It is also recognized that such grates must be closed to prevent the emergency escape of the occupants.

6. Specify what criteria this proposal meets. You may select more than one.

- ☒ The amendment is needed to address a critical life/safety need.
- ☒ The amendment clarifies the intent or application of the code.
- ☐ The amendment is needed to address a specific state policy or statute.
- ☐ The amendment is needed for consistency with state or federal regulations.

- ☐ The amendment is needed to address a unique character of the state.
☐ The amendment corrects errors and omissions.

7. Is there an economic impact: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Explain: This proposal only clarifies what is unobstructed and not obstructed and does not create any construction requirements to a project.

Provide your best estimate of the construction cost (or cost savings) of your code change proposal? (See OFM Life Cycle Cost [Analysis tool](#) and [Instructions](#); use these [Inputs](#).)

\$0.00 / square foot (For residential projects, also provide \$0.00 / dwelling unit)

Show calculations here, and list sources for costs/savings, or attach backup data pages

N/A

List any code enforcement time for additional plan review or inspections that your proposal will require, in hours per permit application:

Please send your completed proposal to: sbcc@des.wa.gov

All questions must be answered to be considered complete. Incomplete proposals will not be accepted.

2021 International Residential Code

Revise as follows:

R310.1 Emergency escape and rescue opening required. Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have not less than one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, an emergency escape and rescue opening shall be required in each sleeping room. ~~Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court having a minimum width of 36 inches (914 mm) that opens to a public way.~~

Exceptions:

1. Storm shelters and basements used only to house mechanical equipment not exceeding a total floor area of 200 square feet (18.58 m²).
2. Where the dwelling unit or townhouse unit is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section P2904, sleeping rooms in basements shall not be required to have emergency escape and rescue openings provided that the basement has one of the following:
 - 2.1. One means of egress complying with Section R311 and one emergency escape and rescue opening.
 - 2.2. Two means of egress complying with Section R311.
- ~~3. A yard shall not be required to open directly into a public way where the yard opens to an unobstructed path from the yard to the public way. Such path shall have a width of not less than 36 inches (914 mm).~~

Add new text as follows:

R310.1.1 Access. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court that provides an unobstructed path with a minimum width of 36 inches (914 mm) that opens to a public way. The following are permitted within the unobstructed path:

1. Gates readily operable without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort.
2. Window wells equipped with a cover complying with Section R310.4.4.

Revise as follows:

~~**R310.1.1**~~ **R310.1.2 Operational constraints and opening control devices.** Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge. Window opening control devices and fall prevention devices complying with ASTM F2090 shall be permitted for use on windows serving as a required emergency escape and rescue opening and shall be not more than 70 inches (178 cm) above the finished floor.

Reason: For clarity, this proposal separates the provisions and exceptions for where Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings (EERO) are required under Section R310.1 from the access/evacuation path conditions under new Section R310.1.1. In addition, Exception #3 has been removed as it is now covered under Section R310.1.1. This proposal also provides for flexibility by identifying which objects are permitted within the unobstructed path.

Currently, Section R310.1 is silent on what constitutes an acceptable path from an EERO to the public way, which leads to inconsistency in the application of this code section. As development density increases, yards are used to satisfy a variety of landscaping, amenity, on-site drainage retention, and mechanical requirements. In addition to topographic features, these objects and physical features can prevent occupants from self-evacuating or impede access to the EERO by fire service personnel.

This proposal limits obstructions to gates and window wells with conditions. It is reasonable to permit a gate, typically associated with privacy fencing, to be located within the unobstructed path. The associated conditions ensure that the gate allows for free passage and does not impede occupants self-evacuating to the public way or access by emergency personnel. In addition, window wells are commonly located within narrow side yards which can encroach into the required 36-inch wide path. The requirement that the cover complies with Section R310.4.4 eliminates any fall/tripping hazard, removes the potential hazard of a window well within the path of EEROs to the ROW, and ensures the continuity of the evacuation/access path.

Cost Impact: The code change proposal will not increase or decrease the cost of construction

The proposal clarifies what is permitted in the unobstructed path and does not create any additional construction requirements for a project.